The Metric and English Systems of Measurement

Today's students need to learn two ways to measure. They must learn the metric system and the English system. The metric system is used throughout most of the world. The English system is the one used by most people in the United States (Schultheis and Kaczmarski 603). This has not always been the case.

In 1821, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams told the U.S. Congress that our country should use the metric system. Not until 1866, however, did Congress make the use of the metric system legal in our country. Since that time, metrics have been used more and more (Metric System). People in medicine and science were among the first in our country to use metrics.

In 1971, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce proposed that the U.S. use the metric system. He wanted us to change to it over a ten-year period. Four years later, President Gerald Ford signed the Metric Conversion Act. This act helped our country use more metrics, but it did not include a conversion plan (Metric System).

Today metrics are everywhere in our country! Track and field distances, heights, and weights are now measured in metrics. Car engines and soft drink container sizes are stated in metrics. The size of film and the nutrition information listed on food packages are given in metric units. The size of the nuts, bolts, and screws that hold our products together are other examples of common items that are measured in metric units. There are many other examples as well.

The metric system is based on units of ten. Some people think that this makes the metric system easier to use than the English system. In addition,

Americans still use English system units in their daily life. English units are used when we purchase building materials like wood and concrete. We describe our height and weight in English units. We also use English units to measure our driving speed and distances. Because we need to know both the English system and the metric system units, we frequently need to refer to a list showing both.